



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE NEW PLAN OF ADMISSION IN ENGLISH TO HARVARD COLLEGE

CHESTER NOYES GREENOUGH
Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.

In June and September, 1911, were given the first examinations under the new plan for admission to Harvard College. The institution of this new plan was an attempt to meet the needs of those for whom the requirements as defined under the old plan have seemed so rigid as to make it well-nigh impossible for a school to adapt its teaching to a small minority of boys preparing for Harvard. The new plan is not supposed to be easier than the old, but merely less complicated. Nor does the new plan supersede the old: it is proposed merely as an alternative. For some years, at least, the old plan seems likely to be chosen by a majority of the candidates for admission.

Under the new plan the testimony of the school is accepted as regards the quantity of work done, and the quality of the work done is tested by four examinations, one of which must be English. To illustrate the plan more fully, I shall first try to explain what the Committee on Admission regards as a satisfactory statement from the school concerning the course of study; secondly, to show what is required in the examinations, and particularly in the examination in English; and, thirdly, I shall reprint, with some comment, the papers given under the new plan in June and September, 1911.

No candidate may present himself for examination unless the Committee on Admission has approved an official statement from the principal of his school, showing in detail the subjects which the boy has studied and the amount of work done in each, the amount of time devoted to these subjects, and the marks received. Care should be taken to make this account as specific as possible. In English it is particularly desirable that the committee should know the amount of actual composition that is given and the amount of personal conference between teacher and pupil. It is

also useful to know what percentage is necessary for recommendation to those colleges that accept certificates, or to know in which third of his class the candidate stands.

This statement of the school course will not be approved unless it shows, first, that the candidate has completed four years of preparation; second, that his course has consisted chiefly of languages, science, mathematics, and history, no one of which may be omitted; and, third, that two studies have been pursued beyond their elementary stages; that is, to the point required by the present advanced examinations of Harvard College, or by the examinations of the College Entrance Examination Board. It is not necessary that the candidate present himself for examination in either of these two advanced studies; if he does so present himself, however, he will not receive credit for either of those studies unless he exhibits in his examination the attainments of an advanced student; that is to say, if history is one of the two advanced subjects and also one of the four subjects in which the candidate offers himself for examination, a degree of knowledge merely sufficient to pass elementary history will not be adequate. The importance of a satisfactory school record under the new plan may be indicated by the fact that of the 186 candidates who applied in 1911 to be admitted under the new plan, 46, or about 25 per cent, were not allowed to take the examinations because their high-school records failed to receive the approval of the Committee on Admission.

If the school record is approved, the candidate is required to present himself for examination in four subjects, as follows:

- a) English.
- b) Latin, or, for candidates for the degree of S.B., either French or German.
- c) Mathematics or physics or chemistry.
- d) Any subject (not already selected under *b* or *c*) from the following list: Greek, French, German, history, mathematics, physics, chemistry.

These four examinations must be taken at one time, either in June or in September.

The results of these examinations, together with the evidence of the school record, are considered by the Committee on Admission as a unit; that is to say, the Committee on Admission does not ask if a boy has passed in history or if he has passed in Latin

or English; it asks, rather, if the impression that he has made upon those who have known him best in school, supplemented by the impression that he has made upon his examiners in four subjects which are considered as typical, justifies his admission to Harvard College. It is not, under the new plan, possible for a student to be credited on the college books with having passed in history and English, but having failed in physics. Under the new plan he either is or is not found to be fitted to pursue the studies of the Freshman year in Harvard College; in other words, he is either accepted unconditionally or told that he must try all the examinations over again.

It will readily be seen that in such a scheme the examination in English has a very important place. Its main purpose is not to answer the question, Is the boy fitted to enter the prescribed course in English composition or the elective course in English literature of the Freshman year? but rather to help answer the larger question, Has the boy shown in his examination in English sufficient grasp, maturity, and "gumption" to become a useful member of the University?

It is, of course, impossible to say exactly what weight in the decision of the examiner is given to spelling, sentence structure, punctuation, etc., but perhaps the following extracts from a list of suggestions to readers of entrance examination books in English in June, 1911, may serve to indicate the point of view of the examiner:

In judging the books of candidates under the new plan, readers are to be particularly watchful for signs of real capacity and power, even though the training may be somewhat irregular. Readers are, however, to mark with reasonable severity, in the case of candidates under the new plan as well as of others, all fundamental errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar, idiom, sentence structure, paragraph structure, etc. An effort should be made to distinguish errors that are due to hasty composition under somewhat disconcerting conditions from those that are the result of training and habit. Greater importance, of course, is to be attached to errors of the latter class. In considering misspelling, it is to be remembered that a candidate who attempts unsuccessfully to use rather long and difficult words is to be regarded more leniently than one who misspells common words. Great importance should be attached to the answers to questions particularly suited to test the initiative of the candidate. To a certain degree, conspicuous success in handling such questions may be allowed to atone for deficiency elsewhere.

To guide readers in their decisions upon books, it is desirable that the following general points be considered and reported upon:

1. Indicate every case of striking deficiency in technical knowledge of English composition.
2. Indicate every case of conspicuous lack of acquaintance with the books. If the ignorance of the books used for study is striking, note that as a separate fact.
3. Indicate every case where unusual skill in English composition seems to atone for a certain lack of acquaintance with the prescribed books.
4. Indicate every case where unusual knowledge of the books would seem to excuse a certain lack of training and practice in English composition.
5. Note unusual ability or deficiency of any other kind than those already named.
6. Give an opinion on this question: Does the examination show that the candidate is ready to take English A ?¹
7. Give an opinion on this question: Regardless of English A, does the examination show that the candidate has the necessary grasp and maturity to undertake the work of the Freshman year ?

The aim of the new plan, so far as it affects the papers in English, will probably be made much clearer by an examination of the papers reprinted below. The first of these is that for June, 1911; the second is that for September, 1911.

ENGLISH (Three Hours)

NEW PLAN

Write carefully: the quality of your English is even more important than your knowledge of the subject-matter. Plan your answers before you write them, and look them over carefully after you have written them. Do not try to do more than you can do well in the time allowed.

A

Answer three of the following six questions:

1. Select from any play which you have read an important character who has one marked weakness, and show into what difficulties this weakness leads him.
2. Quote twenty consecutive lines of poetry and then tell very briefly why you think them good poetry.
3. Suppose a public library, wishing to interest people in good reading, to be composing brief descriptive lists of novels and essays. Suppose the first note to have run thus: "*Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson:

¹ English A is a course in English composition prescribed for those Freshmen who do not anticipate it by passing an advanced examination.

An exciting romance of the sea, pirates, buried treasure, and other adventures. Vivid descriptions of both scenes and persons. John Silver, the cook, is one of the great characters in English prose fiction." Write similar brief descriptive notes for any three novels or books of essays that you have read, whether on the prescribed list or not.

4. Identify as many as you can of the characters on the following list by telling in what book each occurs and by describing each in two or three adjectives:

Virgilius	Madam Eglantine
Sydney Carton	Ichabod Crane
Jessica	Malvolio
Guinevere	Squire Thornhill
"Poor Peter"	Apollyon
Dunstan Cass	Locksley

5. What are the chief differences between prose and poetry?

6. Suppose that you found in one book the statement that Dr. Johnson's manners were very rude and in another book the statement that Dr. Johnson's manners were not rude. Tell as fully as you can what steps you would take and what general principles you would apply in deciding which of these statements was more nearly correct.

B

Write a composition on one of the following subjects. Plan your composition carefully, and pay special attention to paragraphing. Allow not less than one hour for this part of the paper.

7. Any one of the questions under A that you have not already answered.

8. Have you ever read a book which you enjoyed more than any of the books on the prescribed list? Why did you like it?

9. Write a character sketch of any person of your acquaintance who reminds you of any character in a book. Try to explain the resemblances as fully and vividly as you can.

10. Tell, in the form of a letter, the story of some vacation trip or adventure.

11. The sources and uses of rubber.

12. Photographic lenses.

13. Tell, from the point of view of one of the chief characters, the story of some narrative poem.

C

Answer two of the following questions:

14. In what period of English literature do you think the following passage was written? Why?

Avoid Extremes; and shun the fault of such,
Who still are pleas'd too little or too much.
At ev'ry trifle scorn to take offence,
That always shows great pride, or little sense;
Those heads, as stomachs, are not sure the best,

Which nauseate all, and nothing can digest.
 Yet let not each gay Turn thy rapture move;
 For fools admire, but men of sense approve:
 As things seem large which we thro' mists descry,
 Dulness is ever apt to magnify.

15. Explain as many as you can of the following phrases:

"Caviare to the general"	"Machiavellian"
"Ocean greyhound"	"Open sesame"
"Apple of discord"	"Return from Elba"
"Tilting at windmills"	"Ugly duckling"
"Quixotic"	

16. Retell in your own words, and rather fully, the incident narrated in the following passage:

Hamlet: So much for this, sir: now shall you see the other;
 You do remember all the circumstance?

Horatio: Remember it, my lord!

Ham.: Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
 That would not let me sleep: methought I lay
 Worse than the mutines in the bilboes. Rashly,
 And praised be rashness for it, let us know,
 Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
 When our deep plots do pall: and that should teach us
 There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
 Rough-hew them how we will—

Hor.: That is most certain.

Ham.: Up from my cabin,
 My sea-gown scarf'd about me, in the dark
 Grope'd I to find out them; had my desire,
 Finger'd their packet, and in fine withdrew
 To mine own room again; making so bold,
 My fears forgetting manners, to unseal
 Their grand commission; where I found, Horatio—
 O royal knavery!—an exact command,
 Larded with many several sorts of reasons,
 Importing Denmark's health and England's too,
 With, ho! such bugs and goblins in my life,
 That, on the supervise, no leisure bated,
 No, not to stay the grinding of the axe,
 My head should be struck off.

Hor.: Is't possible?

Ham.: Here's the commission: read it at more leisure.
 But wilt thou hear me how I did proceed?

Hor.: I beseech you.

Ham.: Being thus be-netted round with villanies—
 Ere I could make a prologue to my brains,
 They had begun the play—I sat me down,
 Devised a new commission, wrote it fair:
 I once did hold it, as our statists do,
 A baseness to write fair and labour'd much
 How to forget that learning, but, sir, now
 It did me yeoman's service: wilt thou know
 The effect of what I wrote?

- Horatio:* Ay, good my lord.
Hamlet: An earnest conjuration from the king,
 As England was his faithful tributary,
 As love between them like the palm might flourish,
 As peace should still her wheaten garland wear
 And stand a comma 'tween their amities,
 And many such-like 'As'es of great charge,
 That, on the view and knowing of these contents,
 Without debatement further, more or less,
 He should the bearers put to sudden death,
 Not shriving-time allow'd.
- Hor.:* How was this seal'd?
Ham.: Why, even in that was heaven ordinant.
 I had my father's signet in my purse,
 Which was the model of that Danish seal;
 Folded the writ up in form of the other,
 Subscribed it, gave't the impression, placed it safely.
 The changeling never known. Now, the next day
 Was our sea-fight; and what to this was sequent
 Thou know'st already.

June, 1911

ENGLISH (Three Hours)

NEW PLAN

Write carefully: the quality of your English is even more important than your knowledge of the subject-matter. Plan your answers before you write them, and look them over carefully after you have written them. Do not try to do more than you can do well in the time allowed.

A

Answer three of the following questions:

1. Select from any novel which you have read an important character who has one marked weakness, and show into what difficulties this weakness leads him.
2. Describe, from the point of view of a spectator in the theater, that scene which most appealed to you in any of the plays which you have read. (Do not give a summary of the plot, but treat the scene as a picture or tableau.)
3. Suggest other suitable titles for any three of the following books: *Julius Caesar*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *As You Like It*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, *The Tale of Two Cities*, *Silas Marner*, *Sesame and Lilies*, *The Rape of the Lock*.
4. Identify as many as you can of the characters on the following list by telling in what book each occurs and by describing each in two or three adjectives:

Captain Sentry
 Fluellen
 Beatrice
 Gratiano
 Alexander Selkirk
 Sir Guyon

Rosalind
 Sir Plume
 Frank Castlewood
 Matthew Maule
 Viola
 Isaac of York

5. Quote twenty consecutive lines of poetry, and then tell very briefly why you think them good poetry.

6. Arrange in chronological order Dr. Johnson, Milton, Scott, Ben Jonson, Pope. Arrange these names in what you think would have been Wordsworth's order of preference. Arrange them in what you think would have been Addison's order of preference.

B

Write a composition on one of the following subjects. Plan your composition carefully, and pay special attention to paragraphing. Allow not less than one hour for this part of the paper.

7. Any one of the questions under A which you have not already answered.

8. A description of some person, house, or village with which you are familiar.

9. Write a short account of the career and aims of some *one* of the following persons: Aeneas, Pericles, Charlemagne, Cromwell, Alexander Hamilton.

10. Which of your studies do you think has done you the most good? Why?

11. Photographic plates.

12. Wireless telegraphy.

C

Answer two of the following questions:

11. Tell in your own words as fully as possible what the following passage means:

Hamlet:

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die; to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause: there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life;
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office and the spurns
That patient merit of the unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will
And makes us rather bear those ills we have

Than fly to others that we know not of?
 Thus conscience does make cowards of us all;
 And thus the native hue of resolution
 Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
 And enterprises of great pitch and moment
 With this regard their currents turn awry,
 And lose the name of action.

12. Which of the following passages do you prefer? Why?

(a) See what delights in sylvan scenes appear!
 Descending Gods have found Elysium here.
 In woods bright Venus with Adonis stray'd,
 And chaste Diana haunts the forest-shade.
 Come, lovely nymph, and bless the silent hours,
 When swains from shearing seek their nightly bow'rs,
 When weary reapers quit the sultry field,
 And crown'd with corn their thanks to Ceres yield.
 This harmless grove no lurking viper hides,
 But in my breast the serpent Love abides.
 Here bees from blossoms sip the rosy dew,
 But your Alexis knows no sweets but you.
 Oh deign to visit our forsaken seats,
 The mossy fountains, and the green retreats!
 Where'er you walk, cool gales shall fan the glade;
 Trees, where you sit, shall crowd into a shade;
 Where'er you tread, the blushing flowers shall rise,
 And all things flourish where you turn your eyes.
 Oh! how I long with you to pass my days,
 Invoke the Muses, and resound your praise!
 Your praise the birds shall chant in ev'ry grove,
 And winds shall waft it to the pow'rs above,
 But would you sing, and rival Orpheus' strain,
 The wond'ring forest soon should dance again;
 The moving mountains hear the pow'rful call,
 And headlong streams hang list'ning in their fall!

(b) The Rainbow comes and goes,
 And lovely is the Rose,
 The Moon doth with delight
 Look round her when the heavens are bare,
 Waters on a starry night
 Are beautiful and fair;
 The sunshine is a glorious birth;
 But yet I know, where'er I go,
 That there hath past away a glory from the earth.
 Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
 And while the young lambs bound
 As to the tabor's sound,
 To me alone there came a thought of grief:
 A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
 And I again am strong:
 The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
 No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
 I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
 The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,

And all the earth is gay;
Land and Sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every Beast keep holiday;—
Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy!

13. Explain as many as you can of the following phrases:

"Gordian knot"	"Fabian policy"
"New lamps for old"	"Widow's mite"
"Sour grapes"	"To cry wolf"
"Whited sepulchres"	"Barmecide feast"
"Malapropism"	

September, 1911

A few comments upon these papers may serve to suggest some general principles. It will be noticed that Part B of the paper requires a composition of fair length, the subject of which may be drawn from a considerable variety of fields. The subject need not have anything to do with English or with any other school study, although certain subjects, drawn from the field of English, history, and science, are proposed. It has seemed desirable that this composition should generally be either an exposition or a narrative of fact. Good results usually appear from those subjects which permit a student to select a favorite book or person for discussion. Such subjects are Nos. 8 and 11 of the June paper, and Nos. 8 and 10 of the September paper. The composition written under B is almost always, and should be, the longest single answer in the paper. It is, therefore, very useful in showing whether the candidate has or has not learned to make one point grow naturally out of another and to fit one paragraph firmly and neatly into another.

The purpose of Part A of the paper is partly to show the candidate's ability to write, partly to show whether he remembers the subject-matter of the books that he has read, and partly to show whether he has a definite and genuine appreciation of good literature. These purposes are combined in almost every question in this group. Most of the questions in this group may be briefly answered by anyone who knows the books well. It has been the aim of the examiner to set some questions in this group which can be answered from almost any possible list of reading, but which

nevertheless require a very specific answer. Such questions are the first in the June paper and the first two in the September paper. One important aim of the new-plan paper may fairly appear each year in one or two questions in Part A; namely, the aim to test the ability of the candidate to apply what he has learned to the solution of an unexpected problem. Such a problem, it is hoped, is that in question 6 of the June paper, or in the second and the third parts of the sixth question in the September paper. The intelligence revealed in answers to such questions is very carefully noted by the examiner and has great weight in helping him to form his decision.

The third part of the paper corresponds to the questions on the study books under the old plan of admission. On the two papers thus far given under the new plan, this third part tests, first, the ability of the student to make a clear summary of a passage of poetry just after he has read it (it is not assumed that he has ever seen this passage of poetry before); second, his ability to distinguish between entirely different tones in poetry and to know why he likes one more than another; third, his ability to recognize (as in the fourteenth question of the June paper) the plain hall-marks of important periods in the history of English literature; and fourth, his ability to explain some of the phrases which have become a part of the common knowledge of reading and thinking people.

It is to be hoped that in the consideration and discussion of this new plan we may not forget that by "requirements" in English should be meant not certain books, but certain kinds and degrees of attainment. Those who have charge of the examinations for admission to Harvard, and particularly those who have charge of the preparation and reading of the examination for admission in English, will be very grateful for comments of any kind from teachers of English or others who have opinions about the new plan. Their gratitude will be warmest, however, to those who will be good enough to bear in mind the point made just above; namely, that it is most desirable to come to some sort of agreement upon the kinds and the degrees of capacity that may reasonably be expected of those who take this examination. After we have put our minds to that, it should not be particularly difficult to choose books adapted to develop and test such powers.